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With every step they take along the road to the construction of a communist society the Soviet people are reaching ever new frontiers in the achievement of true equality of rights and the triumph of social justice. During a comparatively short historical period much has been done in the Soviet State, the sixtieth anniversary of which will be observed on 22 December 1982, towards achieving the active participation of millions of women workers in State construction, developing socialist democracy, legality and equality of rights and solving complex socio-political, economic and national problems.

In the united family of the peoples of the multinational workers' and peasants' State, great successes have been achieved by the Byelorussian SSR and all the Soviet republics in the production of material and spiritual goods. Condemned of old to backwardness under the conditions prevailing in Tsarist Russia, the Byelorussian people have marched confidently into their socialist future and climbed the heights of social progress. All this has naturally played an important part in ensuring that women should have genuine equality of rights with men.

The actual achievements of the Soviet State in applying the principle of equality of rights to all social groups and to all sections of the population go far beyond the requirements of the international conventions concluded under the sponsorship of the United Nations and the specialized agencies for the purpose of promoting equal rights for men and women. During the years of Soviet rule the importance of women's participation in the development of society and in the improvement of the well-being of the family has been duly appreciated and the social significance of motherhood and the role of both parents in the family and in child-rearing have been fully recognized.

The message of greetings of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to Soviet women on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 1982 stated in particular: "Socialism has given women true freedom and extensive opportunities for developing their creative powers. The country is justifiably proud of your achievements in various fields - the economy, science and culture, education, health and sport. You labour with great zeal and effort on every front so that our fatherland may become richer, stronger and more beautiful and so that the life and existence of the Soviet peoples may be improved".

Extensive opportunities are available to the women of the Byelorussian SSR to participate actively in political, economic, social and cultural life. Article 33 of the Constitution of the Byelorussian SSR states:

"Women and men have equal rights in the Byelorussian SSR.

"The exercise of these rights is ensured by granting women the same opportunities as men in obtaining an education and vocational training, in work, pay and promotion and in socio-political and cultural activity and also by enacting special measures for protecting women's well-being at work and their health: the creation of conditions enabling women to combine work and motherhood, legal protection, material and moral support for mothers and children, including the granting of paid leave and other benefits to pregnant women and mothers and the gradual shortening of working hours for women with young children."

Thus, the Constitution not only proclaims the equal rights of women and men but it also guarantees them by creating the conditions necessary for the realization of true equality of rights. Every woman who has reached the age of 18 years is entitled, regardless of her nationality, creed, way of life, property status or social origin, to take part in elections to government bodies and people's courts and to be elected. Women play an important part in government bodies of the Byelorussian SSR. In the February 1980 elections to the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian SSR, the highest government body of the Republic, 180 women, representing 37.1 per cent of the total number of deputies, were elected; the figure in 1975 was 159. On 20 June 1982, 42,326 women were elected as peoples' deputies of the Byelorussian SSR to the district, regional, urban, village and settlement soviets (this figure represented 49.6 per cent of the total number of deputies; the corresponding figure for 1975 was 46.7 per cent).

The women deputies are workers, collective-farm workers, physicians and teachers, directors of institutions and undertakings - in short, active participants in the economic, cultural and socio-political life of the Republic. Discharging the duties of deputies to the soviets, they play an important part in direct administration by the State since the soviets,

which constitute the single system of government bodies of the Republic, afford an unparalleled opportunity for combining and harnessing the creative initiative of the broad masses and turning it to the common good, because in the resolution of any problem a vast range of opinions and suggestions can be taken into account.

There are increasing opportunities for fruitful participation by women in the management of State and economic affairs. The Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Byelorussian SSR, the secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic and the directors of several ministries, departments and organizations are women. Similarly, women direct activities in the executive committees of local soviets of the people's deputies in their capacity as chairmen, deputy chairmen and secretaries of executive committees. In the State and economic administrative bodies and the management bodies of public and co-operative organizations, 64 per cent of the staff are women.

Women are widely represented in the administrative staff of trade-union bodies and other public organizations. They take an active part in the work of various creative associations and of organizations engaged in the development of friendly relations with public bodies in foreign countries and in the activities of the Soviet Women's Committee.

One of the important factors contributing to the genuine realization of women's rights and freedoms in the various spheres of life is their achievement of equal rights in the economic domain. Their widespread integration into the social production process is a contributory factor in the successful fulfilment of the planned goals of the eleventh five-year plan (1981-1985). In 1981 industrial production in the Byelorussian SSR increased 4.5 per cent over the previous year. Labour productivity rose by 3 per cent, which accounted for more than two-thirds of the increase in production. Payments and benefits to the population from public consumption funds amounted to 4.2 billion roubles and increased by 217 million roubles per annum.

The increasing scales of production guarantee that every able-bodied man and woman can find work in keeping with his or her vocation, capabilities, vocational training and education. The right to work is the foundation of the position of women in so far as equal rights are concerned, and it is established in article 38 of the Constitution of the

Byelorussain SSR. A special chapter of the Republic's labour code is devoted to matters relating to the protection of the labour activities of women. The law prohibits the denial of employment in an undertaking or institution or in a collective farm on grounds of sex (except where heavy work or work harmful to the female organism is concerned).

It is also forbidden to discriminate against women on grounds of age when it comes to employment, and all workers between 16 and 18 years of age are entitled to the following benefits: a shortened working day paid at full rates, extended annual leave, special protection for health and safety at work and so on. There are job placement arrangements for older women as well. The State offers various incentives for the employment of retired women (the pensionable age for women is 55 and for certain occupations 50 or even 45). It is forbidden for the management on its own initiative to deny employment to or to dismiss pregnant women, nursing mothers or women with children under one year of age.

Women represent 53 per cent of the total number of manual and office workers in the national economy of the Byelorussian SSR. In the various branches of trade, public catering, supply of materials and equipment and marketing the figure is 80 per cent; in public health, physical culture and social welfare, 81 per cent; in public education, 74 per cent; in cultural activities, 77 per cent; in credit and State insurance activities, 82 per cent.

Women in the Republic make extensive use of their right to engage in skilled work. Women represent 53.9 per cent of those with higher education and 64.5 per cent of those with specialized secondary education.

The system of industrial trade schools offers extensive opportunities for simultaneously obtaining high-level vocational training and a general secondary education. There are 46,000 girls studying in 223 industrial trade schools in Byelorussia. Graduates of schools belonging to the industrial trade training system are employed in practically all branches of the national economy. A good deal of attention is paid to the training of women for trades at the enterprises themselves - in schools for teaching advanced methods of work, in courses and so on. In recent years many new types of training and re-training methods have been developed for providing women workers with a higher level of skills: training centres, workshops, laboratories, etc.

Raising the educational level and the general cultural background of women is essential to enable them not only to master creative lines of work but also to perform social work and handle the education of children. An extensive system of benefits is provided for those who combine education and work: a shortened work week, paid leave for taking examinations and preparing graduation theses, etc.

Systematic implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work has become an immutable law of life in the Byelorussian SSR. In accordance with their vocational training, women who perform the same work as men are paid at the same wage rates or scales as men.

Of late a number of measures affecting the social position of women in the family have been enacted. Among these are the granting of additional benefits in paid leave for the care of sick children, an increase in State assistance to persons who have been invalids since childhood, a rise in the levels of State budgetary expenditure for the maintenance of maternity and children's hospitals and so forth.

The widespread and fruitful participation of women in social affairs is furthered by the creation of favourable working conditions. In compliance with the decisions of the Twenty-sixth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union special measures have been adopted with respect to ensuring better conditions of health and hygiene at work, improving the working shift system and introducing more suitable work schedules for working women. Collective agreements and social development plans in enterprises include special provisions for improving the working conditions and life of women, for developing social and general services directly in the enterprises and for raising the qualifications of women.

Still other measures have been adopted in connection with the protection of mothers and children and with improving the working and living conditions of women. A resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of the USSR Council of Ministers concerning measures for increasing State assistance to families with children, dated 22 January 1981, provides for the introduction of partially paid leave for the care of children until they reach the age of one year for the benefit of working mothers with a total length of service of at least one year and also of women who are detached from production work for training purposes. Together with the introduction of this type of leave, provision has been made for additional leave

without pay until the child reaches the age of one and a half, the period of service being treated as maintained both in general and in the field of specialization. Later it is planned to extend the additional leave until the child reaches the age of two.

By a decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Byelorussian SSR and the Council of Ministers of the Byelorussian SSR dated 15 May 1981, instructions have been issued to the State Committee of the Byelorussian SSR, the Byelorussian Trade Unions Council, the district executive committees and the Minsk municipal executive committee to formulate and carry out a number of measures designed to create more favourable conditions for women, enabling them to combine work in production with the raising of children.

These measures are concerned, in particular, with the widespread extension of the system of working less than a full week or day and flexible hours for working women, especially in lines of production where the use of female labour predominates, in trade, public catering and other enterprises (institutions) of the service type and also in work at home.

A contributory factor in the creation of improved conditions f[illegible]he education of children and for the combination of an occupation with family obligations is the system for the rearing of pre-school-age children in nurseries and kindergartens. There are 3,700 institutions of this kind now functioning in the Byelorussian SSR, attended by over 489,000 children. Eighty per cent of the annual cost of maintaining children in these institutions is paid by the State itself and only 20 per cent by the parents. During the current five-year period it is planned to reduce the payment by half in the case of families with four children or more. New model projects for pre-school institutions are being devised in which use is made of the latest scientific and technical achievements in the field of design and construction.

Great attention is paid in the Byelorussian SSR to protecting the health of women. Medical care for women, as for the entire population, is free of charge and is also provided through a network of special institutions including women's clinics, maternity homes and maternity wards in hospitals. Facilities of this kind, more than 600 in number, are to be found in every region and in every town. A scientific research institute concerned with the protection of mothers and children has been set up in the Republic and is operating efficiently.

Much attention is paid to improving the housing conditions of families with many children. In January 1980 the Council of Ministers of the Byelorussian SSR and the Byelorussian Trade Unions Council adopted a resolution giving families in which twins have been born and families having three or more minor children priority in the allocation of housing.

The policy of providing ever wider opportunities for women and of creating the essential conditions for their broader involvement in the political, economic and cultural life of society is being carried out steadfastly by the Soviet Government in all phases of communist construction.